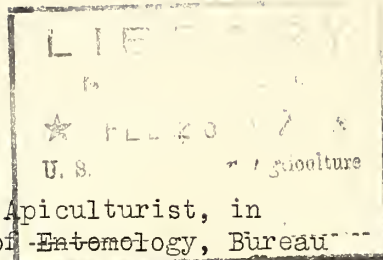


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SPRING WORK WITH BEES:



A radio talk prepared by E. L. Sechrist, Associated Apiculturist, in charge, Pacific Coast Bee Culture Field Station, Bureau of Entomology, Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture, and delivered by Carl J. Hansen during the Western Farm and Home Hour Tuesday, February 9, 1932, through Station KGO and eight other stations associated with the NBC-KGO network, Pacific Division, National Broadcasting Company.

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Again, and as usual, the reports come to us that more colonies of bees were lost during winter from starvation than are lost from all other causes. With this in mind we suggest that every beekeeper review the preparations he made for last winter and decide that this fall he will leave enough honey with his bees to supply them with food from fall until spring. It is a penny wise and pound foolish policy to take away so much honey in the fall that the bees will starve unless conditions are such that they can gather considerable nectar during the winter and the bad weather of early spring. The best kind of life insurance for bees is to leave in the hive in the fall, besides what honey may be in the brood chamber, a full depth super full or nearly full of sealed honey. Bees cannot do their best if wintered in one story or in one story with an empty super on top. At the present prices of honey, a beekeeper can afford to let enough honey remain with his bees to winter them well. Seldom does it pay to extract such low-priced honey and feed sugar for winter food. It pays well not to rob the bees too closely.

Particularly is this true in the orange regions, because the orange trees blossom so early that unless the colony has the right start toward building up in the spring it cannot store a full crop of orange honey. And to give it the right start means leaving a full or nearly full super of honey on the colony in the fall. If it also has a young queen, you can let that colony alone and not touch it until about a week before the orange flow begins. Then, if the conditions are right, you may get 100 or even 200 lbs. from orange instead of the usual 20 or 40 lbs. And if a colony is weak in the spring from starvation or because of a poor queen, you simply cannot get a crop of orange honey, no matter what you try to do to the bees in the spring.

With star thistle or alfalfa it is different. These bloom so late in the season that, with proper management a colony can build up and be requeened on the nectar from fruit blossoms. If the colony does not, however, store nearly a full super of honey from fruit bloom, it must, in many locations, have some other source of supply to tide it over the usual dearth from that time until about July first. Feeding sugar for this purpose is expensive and too often is neglected, and many beekeepers move their bees for the time of this dearth to mustard, eucalyptus, or some other local source of nectar. Those who are so situated that they can sell package bees for use in Canada or elsewhere in the North can dispose of those bees which would otherwise eat up honey during the period of dearth and thus may have their colonies in better condition than if bees had not been sold, and have a nice little profit besides.

Requeening in the early springtime also practically does away with swarming during the season. With old queens swarming is likely to occur. This period of ten days to two weeks when no eggs are laid in the hive because of requeening, comes toward the end of fruit blossoming when, in most sections of the Pacific Coast, the bees raised from these eggs would be consumers and not

(over)

producers.

Requeening, therefore, cuts down the population of the hives at a time when no nectar is coming in, and is profitable in that way. To be successful, every beekeeper must know his location, and must time his requeening and other operations in accordance with the nectar flows to which his bees have access. If a man will not take the trouble to study conditions in his locality that influence nectar secretion and honey production, he'd better sell his bees.

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